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NATIONAL ART AND IDENTITY IN MEXICO, 1869-1881: IMAGES OF
INDIANS AND HEROES

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two-volume work are reprinted criticism from Mexico City papers and periodicals, giving a year by year chronicle of the debates.

89 Muriel, op cit, p.569.

90 For an analysis of history texts of the nineteenth century, see Vázquez de Knauth, Josefina, op cit, 1970.

91 Uribe, Eloisa, Problemática de la Producción Escultórica en la Ciudad de México, 1843-1857, Mexico: Universidad Iberoamericana, unpublished bachelor's thesis, 1984, discusses sculpture production of the mid-nineteenth century. She examines the different political bodies which participated in the sculptural projects as well as how they worked within the context of making national history.

92 A case in point is the monument to Hidalgo, proposed for the Ciudad de Dolores Hidalgo. The artist was to get "the direction of the work" as his reward, ASC Gaveta 59, Expediente 7322, July-September, 1869.

93 AGN MJIP, Memoria del MJIP #35, p.173, November 3, 1869.

94 "Con estos premios anuales que poco a poco pueden irse aumentando, el arte tomará en México una importancia que no tiene, y se crearán monumentos que recuerden a los ciudadanos los grandes hechos de la historia nacional, y perpetúen entre ellos la memoria de sus hombres ilustres," ASC 59 #7344, 1869.

CHAPTER III

INDIANS IN HISTORY PAINTING: 1869-81

Indians: Introduction to Sources and Subjects

The most popular subject of national history painters was the prehispanic Mexican Indian, especially the Aztecs, who lived prior to the Spaniards' 1521 conquest of Mexico. Artists almost always portrayed specific scenes from Aztec history. The extant history paintings are of eight different episodes from the pre-conquest and conquest periods. Aztec history predominated because serious scholars and dilettantes knew and published more about the Aztecs than about any other prehispanic culture group. The Mexico City audience had access to sixteenth century chronicles, contemporary scholarly and popular histories, and a museum of artifacts. The Academy of San Carlos library also housed several works which painters could have readily consulted for a narrative of prehispanic history.⁹⁵

Of all prehispanic Indian cultures, modern Mexicans most readily identified with the Aztecs. A clearly stratified society, dominated by a powerful elite who practiced statecraft to perfection, Aztec society was more like modern Mexican society than were other prehispanic cultures. Nineteenth century scholars

employed the vocabulary they used to describe their own emerging nation state to describe the Aztecs and their ability to control a vast population made up of numerous groups who often shared neither language nor dress nor specific rituals or beliefs. By the time the Spaniards arrived in 1519, the Aztecs controlled territory from Northern Mexico to Central America, a feat they accomplished through terror, economic pressure and a powerful state religion. Although nineteenth century Mexicans certainly did not intend to emulate Aztec religious or political practices, they did view these practices as proof of the Aztecs' "advanced degree of civilization" -- as nineteenth century writers often put it. Nineteenth century Mexican scholars paid particular homage to Aztec achievements in art and science. Tangible proof of both was the Aztec Calendar Stone itself -- the monumental cylindrical basalt relief depicting Aztec mythological, cosmogonical and historical imagery. By the late nineteenth century, the stone represented Mexico and her proud prehispanic heritage in, for example, national preparatory texts and international expositions.⁹⁸

Mexican liberals had most ardently promoted and defended Mexico's prehispanic heritage as the nation's most authentic heritage. From the turn of the century, creoles, then liberals, had claimed a fraternity with

Mexico's prehispanic past, as opposed to the peninsulares, who claimed one with Europe's past. These claims of descent, by blood or by culture, were part of other more practical and more overtly political claims made during the struggle for independence at the turn of the century. The creole and peninsular factions which would ultimately transform themselves into liberals and conservatives employed cultural heritage as a means of legitimizing their claim to political, economic and social power.

In literature, including histories and scientific treatises, the creole/liberal faction defended the ancient indigenous past against that of Europe. As twentieth century studies have documented, pro-Indian authors recreated the ancient Indian past, most notably that of the Aztecs, as Mexico's civilized, cultured, classical antiquity. The same authors usually omitted the bloodier aspects of Aztec religious practices and other untidy details or else they cited similar "barbaric" practices from ancient Western civilization. Liberals of the nineteenth century continued this support as a necessity, not only against eurocentric conservatives, but against Europeans in general.

The prehispanic Indian had been the object of image-making since the Conquest. Chronicles written by

friars, conquistadors, and others were often profusely illustrated. It is not the place here to analyze the rationale behind, or the construction of, such sixteenth century works as Fray Diego Durán's Historia de las Indias de la Nueva España y de Tierra Firme, Francisco Clavigero's eighteenth century Historia Antigua de Mexico or William Prescott's The Conquest of Mexico.

These works, among others, offered texts and illustrations to nineteenth century painters. Academic painters also had access to engravings and lithographs by Dutch, German, French, English, Italian and Spanish artists which illustrated histories, atlases, and other texts describing and categorizing the New World.

Europeans faced with narrating non-European history and recreating images of non-European practices and peoples had recreated the prehispanic Indian and his/her culture in their own image and visual vocabulary. One need only look at the encroachment of European perspective,

foreshortening and shadow in the illustrations by native artists in the sixteenth century manuscripts of Fray Bernardino de Sahagún. Other examples include Bernard Picart's early eighteenth century prints of Aztec religious practices, with their checkerboard floors, vaulted ceilings and muscular nudes, or the neo-classical deities posing as Aztec gods in Alexander von Humboldt's Atlas, Vue des Cordillères of 1810. As

these images continued to circulate, to be copied and reproduced, they took on a quality of truth, or documentation, much like the texts they originally illustrated. Such faith is demonstrated when the illustrations from a known anti-Indian text reappear in the text of a known pro-Indian writer. They had become, in essence, just pictures of Indians. The most recent and distinguished of which were academic history paintings.

Academic History Paintings of the Indian

The specific subjects -- events and personages -- portrayed by academic history painters suggest what the content of national history was, as well as how it should look. In this section, the paintings are examined according to the narrative upon which the painting was based and how the subject is shown. In order to understand the chronicle of national history to which these painted stories contributed, the works are analyzed in chronological order of the events shown. The paintings are examined in order of their production and exhibition in Chapters five and six. See Appendix One for the location of those paintings extant and references to those which are not extant or have not been located.

1. Quetzalcoatl Discovers Corn

The Academy chose Quetzalcoatl's discover of corn as one of the themes of the 1880 biennial student painting competition, to be exhibited in 1881. The exhibition catalogue states that the students based their paintings on Brasseur de Bourbourg's Historia de las Naciones Civilizadas, Book 1, Chapter 2.¹⁰³ Brasseur de Bourbourg described Quetzalcoatl's role in creation myths, usually discussed in the context of Toltec history (ca. AD 900-1200). Quetzalcoatl, the legendary noble philosopher-priest, set out to discover sustenance for mankind and found corn, the staple food of prehispanic and modern Mexico. Through his discovery of corn and its ultimate distribution to man, Quetzalcoatl asserted the hierarchic relation between man and god; as he distributed corn, he distributed life.

Four students of painting director José Salomé Pina exhibited their preparatory sketches and cartoons of this subject in the 1881 Academy exhibition: Alberto Bribiesca, José Ibarrarán, Antonio Ruiz and Librado Suárez.¹⁰⁴ Only one of the four works is extant.

Antonio Ruiz's .53 x .83 m. image was reproduced in the illustrated supplement to the 1881 exhibition catalogue¹⁰⁵ [Figure 2]. In this black and white lithograph, the bearded and long-haired Quetzalcoatl stands in the

center of the painting, barefoot and wearing a plain, long-sleeved tunic. In his left arm, bent at the elbow and held close to his body, he holds an ear of corn.

His right arm is bent and raised, with palm held skyward. He looks upward, as if asking for a divine blessing. Quetzalcoatl stands in a clearing, apparently surrounded by a field of corn. Four Indians, two men and a woman to his right, and one man to his left, watch him reverently. One man and the woman carry large sacks of corn while the other two gather it.

2. The Discovery of Pulque

José Obregón exhibited this painting (1.86 x 2.31 m.) with the student works in the 1869 Academy show [Figure 3]. The catalogue description states:

The young Xochitl, led by her parents, offers to the king of Tula, Tecpalcaltzin, the first pitcher of pulque discovered by her; the prince, taken by her beauty, takes her for his wife.¹⁰⁶

Flanked by her parents, Xochitl presents the bowl of pulque, the distilled liquid of the maguey cactus, to Tecpalcaltzin. The ruler sits on an elaborate stone throne. Surrounding the enthroned ruler are approximately a dozen men, presumably courtiers. Behind Xochitl's mother stand three women servants. The first kneels with a sack of containers apparently filled with pulque. Behind this woman stand two more, each carrying

potted maguery plants. The entire event is staged within the dark interior of a masonry palace. A second room housing a large stone figure on a platform is visible through the doorway.

The catalogue does not list a specific literary source for this painting. The most likely source, however, is Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl's Obras históricas, chapter 5, "Relación de los reyes tultecas y de su destrucción."¹⁰⁷ Ixtlilxochitl's written account closely matches Obregon's painted version. Ixtlilxochitl describes a beautiful young girl -- Xochitl -- whose parents accompanied her to the Toltec ruler's palace where the ruler, Tecpancaltzin, indeed took her for his wife.¹⁰⁸

3. The Princess Papantzin

According to the illustrated supplement of the 1981 Academy exhibition catalogue, Juan Urruchi showed a painting entitled The Princess Papantzin [Figure 4].¹⁰⁹ (The text of the 1981 catalogue does not, however, list it as having been exhibited.) Urruchi depicted the Princess in tunic and skirt, seated on a small stone, temple-like structure. Three Indians stand to the left of Papantzin's. The first is a young child who gazes at the princess as he climbs the first of the three temple steps. The other two figures, a man and a woman, stand

at the front right corner of the structure. The woman, clothed also in tunic and skirt, holds the arm of the male with her right hand, while pointing with her straightened left arm at Papantzin. The long-haired man, dressed in cape and loin cloth, pulls away from the woman and looks directly at the princess. The princess regards him rather languidly from her perch on the third step of the platform.

Clavigero, whose own work is based on older, unidentified sources, is one of the few to mention this story in any detail.¹¹⁰ According to Clavigero, Papantzin was Moctezuma II's sister and wife of the governor of Tlatelolco.¹¹¹ She became seriously ill and died in 1509. Her brother gave her a ceremonious burial; she was interred in a subterranean cave sealed with a stone, near a bathing pool close to her palace. The next day, a young child saw the princess sitting on the steps of the pool. The child convinced her mother, a palace servant, to come and see the princess for herself. Papantzin requested her brother's presence. Both Moctezuma and Nezahualpilli, ruler of Texcoco arrived after some coaxing. Papantzin described for them her dream, or as she put it, "a lethargy (which) deprived me of movement and senses."¹¹² In the dream, a young boy told her of the arrival of armed, foreign men. These men were to bring with them "knowledge of the true

God, Creator of Heaven and Earth." After this warning, the princess was restored to life. Urruchi has portrayed the moment in which Moctezuma, the servant and child confront Papantzin. Moctezuma recoils in disbelief.

4. The Deliberation of the Senate of Tlaxcala

The June 17th, 1875 edition of Revista Universal, carried a piece entitled "Boletín, reunion artistica, Museo de Antigüedades, breve ojeada sobre ellas." Its anonymous author stated that the liberal politician and scholar Sánchez Solís had commissioned several paintings depicting notable events of Mexican history. He

commissioned academy student Rodrigo Gutiérrez to paint The Deliberation of the Senate of Tlaxcala [Figure 5].

The article stated that the work was then near completion. Presumably Gutiérrez finished the picture after 1975. He never showed the work at the Academy. It was probably exhibited at Sánchez Solís' own museum-salon.

In this 2.41 by 1.88 m. painting, Gutiérrez has depicted the Tlaxcalan debate on the subject of Tlaxcala's possible alliance or non-alliance with the Spaniards. As mentioned previously, Tlaxcala had managed to avoid complete subjugation by the Aztec empire and had remained hostile to it. Cortés sent an embassy to the Tlaxcalans asking not only for their

alliance, but also for the Spaniards' safe passage through Tlaxcala on the way to Tenochtitlan. The elder, nearly blind, Tlaxcalan lord Xicoténcatl argued against an alliance with the Spaniards. Gutiérrez has shown him explaining this position as he stands on the central platform. Below Xicoténcatl stands a young representative from Cortés' envoy, charged with presenting Cortés' request to

the Tlaxcalan senate. The debate takes place in the dark interior of a stone structure, decorated with walls of pale olive green banded by geometric designs. A stone idol, derived from Aztec models, is visible the background. The figures in the painting are organized around, or atop of, a large, low stepped platform, which consumes roughly half of the canvas. The sides and steps of the platform are decorated with geometric bands, reminiscent of the prehispanic step-fret motif. A crowd of Indians surrounds the platform and watch Xicoténcatl as he speaks. An opening in the crowd establishes the spectator's viewpoint and entry into the painting at the right foreground.

The article describing Gutiérrez' painting names no literary source for the painting. A number of chroniclers of the Conquest had recorded the debate in detail, however, and Gutiérrez' may have used

Ixtlilxochitl's Obras Históricas, because of his and Sánchez Solís alleged descent from the Tlaxcalan ruling house. Ixtlilxochitl he claimed to have based his own description of the debate on an eyewitness account.

5. The Massacre of Cholula

Felix Parra exhibited his .79 x 1.05 m. oil painting, The Massacre at Cholula, in the hall of student paintings for the 1977 Academy exhibition [Figure 6]. Many sources recount the massacre. The essence of the story is that Moctezuma had sent messengers to Cholula to warn them that the Spaniards were coming from Tlaxcala and secured the Cholultecans' aid. Together they plotted to welcome the Spaniards into their city and then ambush them. The Spaniards learned of this treachery, however, and promptly proceeded to attack the city; they murdered, it is estimated, some several thousand inhabitants. They also burned temples and idols and pilfered articles of precious metal and stone. Cortés thus avenged the Cholultecans' deceit. The exhibition catalogue states that Parra had used Fray Bartolomé de las Casas' Historia General de las Indias o bien sea historia apologetica... as a source. Las Casas vividly recounted the Spaniards' greed and the murders they committed. Las Casas claimed that the Spaniards killed more than 30,000 citizens at Cholula. Parra increased the

number, stating in the catalogue description:

(An) original painting representing one of the bloody attempts which the Spaniards committed during the Conquest, because they were not given all the treasures that they asked for, and which according to Las Casas, occasioned the loss of more than four million people.¹²²

In this fairly small, rectangular painting, Parra has depicted the stone ruins of a prehispanic structure. Doorways and walls, which surround a small courtyard, create a cramped picture space. Space extends only on the left side, in which a colonnade recedes, guiding the viewer to a vista of distant mountains. Several large birds hover about the colonnade, flying toward the central courtyard. In the center of the courtyard stands a Spanish soldier in armour, presumably Cortés. Below him lies a dead male Indian, his arms spread out perpendicular to his body, in a Christ-like gesture. Blood from his wound seeps between the cracks of the stone paving. The body, foreshortened and positioned slightly at an angle to Cortés, covers the central area of the platform. To his right and farther back lie two more Indians, sprawled on the ground in a heap. One is obviously a mother, her left arm is outstretched to protect her young child lying on the ground next to her. To Cortés' left sit two Indian women, one clutching her baby to her chest, the other on her knees, leaning for

support on a wooden staff. Bolts of decorated cloth, ceramic pots and an overturned stone idol lie to their left, ready to be counted by their captors. Behind this plunder another armoured soldier stands holding up a necklace to the light. In the background, between the recesses of two structures, walk two more soldiers, carrying spears.

Parra bathed the image in clear, almost silvery light, with forms depicted in virtual photographic clarity. This depiction of what should be a massacre of more than four million people, according to the catalogue description, is crammed into an architectural setting too small for its inhabitants and eerily absent of the wanton carnage and horror the title implies.

6. Fray Bartolomé de las Casas

Felix Parra exhibited his 3.58 x 2.69 m. oil painting Fray Bartolomé de las Casas¹²³ in the hall of student paintings in 1975 [Figure 7]. The catalogue description states of the subject:

This venerable priest, who always deplored the cruel system which the Spanish conquistadores employed to dominate the ancient inhabitants of Mexico, is found in the middle of a destroyed building where the father of a family has been immolated, [the family] had come peacefully to place flowers on the tomb of its ancestors. The abandoned wife takes refuge in the protection of the generous defender, who, with such diligent care, always tried to mitigate the sufferings of the conquered.¹²⁴

Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, who had spent many years in the New World, in both the Caribbean and Mesoamerica, was made Bishop of Chiapas in 1543 at the age of 69. He wrote prolifically; his work included the probable source of Parra's painting: Treatises on the Destruction of the Indies.¹²⁵ Las Casas was

considered extremely sympathetic to his Indian parishioners. Parra has depicted him standing, arms crossed over his chest, holding a crucifix. He stands in front of the entrance to a stone temple. To his right is a stone statue of a kneeling Aztec-inspired deity, mounted on a pyramidal base. To his left are the remnants of a cylindrical stone column. At his feet lies the sprawled body of a dead Indian, and clinging to Las Casas' legs is the man's "wife." The same silvery light washes the painting as in Parra's The Massacre of Cholula.

7. The Capture of Cortés

Alberto Bribiesca, José Ibarrarán, Antonio Ruiz and Librado Suárez each entered their version of The Capture of Cortés in Xochimilco (.50 x .83 m.) for the 1980 student painting competition [Figure 8].¹²⁶ The Academy chose only Ibarrarán's version to reproduce as a black and white lithograph in the catalogue of the exhibition. The other three versions have not been located.

The students based their paintings on Prescott's History of the Conquest of Mexico, published in three volumes in Mexico between 1844 and 1846. Like

Clavigero, Prescott based his history on a number of earlier works. Mexican publisher Ignacio Cumplido illustrated the Spanish translation, but did not include an illustration of the capture of Cortés. In his chapter entitled "The Siege and Surrender of Mexico," Prescott narrates the confrontations between the Spaniards with their Indian allies, and the Aztecs with their allies, which culminated in the so-called "Siege of Mexico," which began in May 1521. Prescott

described the Spaniards' advance towards the lake city of Xochimilco. Aztecs and their allies assailed Cortés and his soldiers with darts, spears and clubs. Eventually, Cortés fell from his horse, and was dragged away by Aztec soldiers. Soon after, however, a Tlaxcalan rescued him.

Ibarrarán painted Cortés being held by two Aztec soldiers. Cortés' resistance appears as minimal as the force being used to hold him. He is almost overshadowed in visual importance by the Indian aggressor lunging with obsidian-bladed club at a shield-bearing Indian enemy. It is not possible to tell whether the Indian represents the Tlaxcalan attacking or behalf of Cortés

or against Cortés' allies. Roughly two dozen adversaries struggle around the central group, the wounded and the dead lie in the fore- and background.

8. The Imprisonment of Cuauhtémoc

Santiago Rebull painted a canvas, now destroyed, and apparently never illustrated, called The Imprisonment of Cuauhtémotzin according to a notice in La Revista Universal of June 17, 1875. Rebull may have depicted the aftermath of the episode in which Cortés and his men imprisoned Cuauhtémoc. Cortés had promised the Aztecs that he would not harm Cuauhtémoc. Cortés' men, however, extremely disappointed at the paltry spoils of conquest that they were to receive, convinced Cortés to torture Cuauhtémoc until he confessed the location of a horde of gold he had allegedly concealed. Cortés then had the soles of Cuauhtémoc's feet slowly burned and covered with grease. Cuauhtémoc revealed only that the treasure had been dumped into the lake.

Instead of this episode, Rebull may possibly have depicted Cuauhtémoc incarceration during Cortés' expedition to Honduras (then called las Hibueras) in 1525. Cuauhtémoc was hanged for his supposed participation in a plot to murder Cortés. Indian allies of Cortés charged Cuauhtémoc with this alleged crime.

Although several sources, including Prescott and López de Gomará, refer to an "imprisonment of Cuauhtémoc," lack of details makes it risky to suggest which source
131
Rebull may have used.

Truth, Beauty and the Painted Indian

Nothing could give a better idea of what an epoch's vision of the past is than these and other pictures of interpretation of the ancient indigenous world of Mexico; and it is that the academic classicist vision of the nineteenth century was a poor mold for that world so distinct from this sweet classicism. But the school of Clavé made marvels and succeeded in making credible, like some historiographers of our time, that it was in truth the people conquered by the Spaniards...the academics neither liked nor understood the autochthonous beauty of the Mexican people, rather they scorned it, therefore they made efforts to give it another classicist beauty, the only one which they had as such. But for all that stated previously, this vision can only seem ingenuous, and for its pretended objectivism, false, completely false, which does not mean to say that it does not remain interesting and authentic for its time.¹³²

The above passage by Justino Fernández is particularly instructive for the analysis of the history paintings just described. Fernández, whose assessment has currency today, is stating the obvious about these paintings: the paintings came out of the academic classicist vision of the "school of Clavé." After all, Clavé or his own students taught these history painters. To be sure, the painters have "molded" much about their features, clothing, furniture and structures, whether it is Indian clothing transformed into togas, stools into

chairs, or dark skin into white skin. Nevertheless, Fernández says, these painters convinced the public that these painted Indians were truly Indians, truly the people conquered by the Spaniards. This is a particularly intriguing feat considering that, as he points out, these academics neither liked nor understood indigenous beauty and consequently transformed the Indians by giving them "classicist beauty." Fernández ends by discounting all that may account for these transformations and calls them false images.

Two basic questions arise from this passage. First, what pictorial language other than academic classicism was available to academic painters, and was it rejected? In other words, what did academic classicism offer to the painters of Indians? Second, what constituted a real Indian and how, if at all, did painters convincingly portray "real" Indians?

In an institution in which drawing was the basis of painting and Winckelmann's volumes were on the shelves of the Academy's library, one would expect to see students trained to paint in an academic-classicist manner. Within the structure of the Academy, there was no other practical option if you wanted to succeed. Even artists not trained at San Carlos attempted to emulate this academic mode. There was, nevertheless, an

alternative pictorial language which academics considered, but rejected: that of prehispanic native painting. In Couto's Dialogue on the History of Painting in Mexico, José Joaquín Pesado said about "paintings of ancient Mexicans":

I know that these paintings, of great interest for archaeology and history, are not equally so for art, which is what is taught in this school. In them, it is not necessary to look for correct drawing, nor the science of chiaroscuro and perspective, nor taste for beauty and grace. It seems that the human figure attracted little attention for these artists, which to our eyes is the prototype of the beautiful...Everything indicates that in the indigenous races, the sense of beauty, from which proceeds all art, had not awakened.¹³³

Ancient Mexican painters made flat, heavily outlined and shadowless images, lacking in "human proportion", and occupying a space entirely conceptual. The elite Aztec scribes did not use aerial or lineal perspective. Prehispanic paintings, of which Couto, Clavé, Pesado and other intellectuals were well aware, were both text and illustration, a partly pictographic and perhaps partly phonetic language for recording everything from genealogies to foundation myth. They were not beautiful and they were not art.

In her provocative article entitled "La figura del Indio en la pintura del siglo XIX: fondo ideológico," Ida Rodríguez Prampolini asserts:

The weight of the predominant neoclassical taste in high society and academic studies considerably retarded the appreciation of prehispanic sculpture and painting.¹³⁴

This, however, must be qualified for several reasons.

First, nineteenth century academic studies did do a great deal to promote the appreciation of prehispanic painting and sculpture. Current appreciation of these things, as well as their interpretation and attempted explanation, is due in no small way to these older academic studies. The first public displays and journals in which those objects were the center of scholarly attention originated in the nineteenth century.¹³⁵ Thus, the historical the process

by which prehispanic sculptures and painting came to be appreciated at all was due in part to the very taste that Rodríguez Prampolini holds responsible for retarding their appreciation. History painting and neo-classicism may have "westernized" the Indian, but together they put them before the public. In their quest to celebrate their own ancient history, Mexican artists did so in such a way that it reflected the public who consumed things classical. The artist also did so by following academic rules. The artist followed these rules hoping to reproduce the same ideals as his European counterpart: hierarchy, linearity, correct

proportion and harmony of color. As Chapters Five and Six will show, the critics of the paintings also looked for these ideals.

The process of westernization, of classicization was thus the result of logical and systematic artistic training. Academic painters followed rules for making compositions of one few, several or many figures. The Academy exhibition catalogues usually list the paintings and prizes according to these categories. These rules effected how national history looked. Parra's own description of the Massacre of Cholula, for example, states that 4 million Indians were slaughtered by the Spaniards. Parra's application of academic rules, specifically for the making of a composition of few figures, obliged him to reduce the number of assaulted and dead Indians to a handful in his painting. Parra had to prove to the faculty and public that he could follow this rule, as well as those demanding hierarchy, order, linearity, correct proportion and harmony of color. Parra followed them well, for his painting won first prize in the category of original compositions in 1877.

What and how the artists painted also conformed to the basic structure of the narrative they chose to depict. The stories they told in images already had assumed the classical and biblical formats of European

history painting. Quetzalcoatl Discovers Corn and the Princess Papantzin Comes Out of her Lethargy are very clearly stories of miracles with particularly Christian allusions. Thematically, Quetzalcoatl embraces the concept of a creator deity who provides his followers with sustenance. In Papantzin, the princess, like Christ, miraculously rises from the dead and specifically from a sepulcher sealed by a stone. In Papantzin, Urruchi's awakening princess in the center and his surprised witnesses belong to a tradition of images of the resurrection of Christ. In Quetzalcoatl, the principle figure, robed and bearded, gestures as if asking for a blessing. Like images of Christ in western painting, his followers surround him, awe-struck at the miracle. The Discovery of Pulque embraces the concept of imperial rule and control over subjects as well as goods. Gutierrez, for example, composed a new world version of a Roman senate in his The Deliberation of the Senate of Tlaxcala. In all three of these paintings, the myths themselves, already westernized because they have been recorded by westerners, are retold in western pictorial narrative forms.

Did classicism and history painting transform the image of the Indian? The answer is yes and no. When twentieth century art historians look for the sources of

these academic paintings, for the means of transforming the Indians, they tend to neglect the histories, both written and illustrated, upon which artists drew. So far, the narrative sources have been mentioned, but not the possible pictorial sources. The Academy and its public considered history painting to be "high art." In contrast they considered to be mere illustrations the prints (engravings and especially lithographs) painters used as pictorial sources.

By using earlier pictorial sources, history painters often transformed what were already transformed images. The works of Manuel Vilar, the Academy's Director of Sculpture, and Juan Cordero, the painter to whom we have already referred, exemplify this process of transformation. As part of his contract, Vilar exhibited a statue of El Emperador Moctezuma II [Figure 9] in 1851 and in 1852, he exhibited a colossal statue of Tlahuicole, Tlaxcaltecan General [Figure 10a]. Moctezuma took Tlahuicole captive during the Conquest and then released him. Moctezuma's release humiliated Tlahuicole since the Tlaxcaltecan then had no opportunity to fight his enemy. Moctezuma permitted him to publicly regain his dignity by participation in a ritual called "gladiatorial sacrifice." In this ritual, the enemy is armed with a useless weapon (a club tipped with feathers) and chained to a stone platform; his

Aztec enemy attacks with real weapons (a club tipped with obsidian blades). In his sculpture, Vilar shows Tlahuicole chained to the stone platform, lunging against his implied adversary.

Vilar's classical prototypes are obvious. Moctezuma appears as a transformed Roman portrait and Tlahuicole as a transformed Hellenistic Zeus. The use of these classical modes is expected within academic practice. Still these are not prototypes of Indians. How, then, did Vilar create an image of an Indian for his audience? Through the portrayal of long hair, staff, and cloak, for example, Vilar creates Moctezuma. Vilar basically adds costume and accoutrements to a body type having no real relation to Indian body types. As if to fully convince his audience, Vilar lists these elements of costume in his catalogue description.

Vilar could have found all of these elements in a number of texts and illustrations. In the case of Tlahuicole, the pose and title confirm his authenticity. Both had already been used previously in lithographs, for example in Sacrificio Gladiatorio which accompanied the text of Clavigero's Historia Antigua de México [Figure 10b]. The combination of text and illustration confirm this otherwise classical figure as apparently genuinely Indian.

To date, no documents definitively identify any of Cordero's written or pictorial sources. For his

Columbus in the Court of the Catholic Sovereigns [Figure 1], the artist may have used illustrations from Antonio de Solís' Historia de la Conquista de Mexico, first published in Madrid in 1764.¹³⁷ The Spanish artist José

Ximeno made engravings for an edition of Solís'

published in 1783-84. One illustration is entitled

"Montezuma Names the King of Spain as Successor to His Imperial Crown: He Gives to Him Obedience and Trust" [Figure 11].

Cordero's painting is strikingly similar to Ximeno's print. If Ximeno's print were elongated horizontally, almost every figure and every pose in one image can be found in the other. The kneeling Indian replaces the kneeling Moctezuma; the Indians in the background are replaced by members of court; Columbus takes the place of the emissary presenting Moctezuma to the King, and so on. Although we cannot prove that Cordero saw this print, the similarities are too marked to ignore.

José Obregón apparently similarly transformed a book illustration into his painting The Discovery of Pulque. Obregón likely transformed Ignacio Cumplido's lithograph of The Coronation of Ixtlixochitl [Figure 12] which illustrated the Mexican edition of Prescott's 1846 edition of The Conquest of Mexico.¹³⁸ If the viewer

reverses the image, it has exactly the same layout as Obregón's composition in the The Discovery of Pulque. Female figures are substituted for males ones, and the open doorway toward which the central figure moves becomes the throne, the central figure becomes Xochitl.

Cordero's Death of Atala, which portrays North American Indians, had already been painted by the French artist Anne-Louis Girodet. Cordero thus transformed Girodet's image which itself was based on Chateaubriand's story.¹³⁹ Cordero painted this around 1847 while still in Rome. Mexican academic painter Luis Monroy painted the same theme again in 1871. It is interesting that although the stories are different, the same three figures in Cordero's The Entombment of Atala appear again in Parra's Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas: two Indians and a priest. The repetition of stock figures or even arrangements of figures in a particular setting and story renders them identifiable. It also suggests that the Indian is being reduced to an essential quality or character, a stereotype which comes to stand for the Indian, real or otherwise. The history painter's brush makes mere illustration of the Indian into high art, and through replication of the Indian in history painting, validates this essence or stereotype.

Real Indian versus False Indians

The next question is, who was the real Indian?

Raquel Tibol's comment on academic paintings of the prehispanic past confirms how indignant twentieth century critics are about these Indians transformed into "vestal virgins" and "athletes," i.e., non-Indians.¹⁴⁰

Referring in particular to Obregón's The Discovery of Pulque [Figure 3] and Gutiérrez' The Deliberation of the Senate of Tlaxcala [Figure 5], she states:

If the nationalist aesthetic sense had been more developed then, this would have been sufficient to demonstrate that the European instrument which Clavé had put into the hands of the Mexican painters was not the most appropriate for the expression of their own reality.¹⁴¹

Against what or whom is this reality to be measured?

The argument thus far suggests that some real Indian has been altered, that every time they transformed hand-me-down images artists altered him/her once more. Who was this real Indian? And is this a fair supposition?

As mentioned earlier, numerous studies of religion, language and other spheres of prehispanic culture had been published from about the mid-nineteenth century on.¹⁴²

The prehispanic Indian was popular. Intellectual

societies called themselves such things as the Aztec Society.¹⁴³

Poets and novelists devoted narrative and verse to prehispanic sagas. The cast of characters in

paintings had appeared and continued to appear, in poetry and novels: these included Cuauhtémoc,

Moctezuma, Xochitl, Xicotencatl, and Nezahualpilli.

Published works include: Ignacio Rodríguez Galván's La profecía de Guatimoc (sic) (1839), Los Aztecas by José Joaquín Pesado (1854), Juan Luis Tercero's Nezahualpilli e el catolicismo en México (1975) and J.R. Hernández' Azcatxochitl o la flecha de oro (1878).¹⁴⁴

Intellectuals saw a marked difference between the ancient and contemporary Indian, i.e., the real Indian. At the same time that intellectuals studied the

prehispanic Indian, they also took a particularly active interest in the contemporary Indian population. On the

one hand, there was the allure of the glorious past and the Aztec empire, the popularity of the Aztec Calendar Stone among tourists, and the splendor of temple-

pyramids. On the other hand, there was the pitiable contemporary Indian. It should be recalled that the

conquering Spaniards purposefully set out to destroy the Indian elite and their culture. The Spanish civil and

clerical authorities assumed rather ready control of the indigenous population once they had destroyed the

Indians' own hierarchy. With the process of conquest, the "real Indian" began to decline in numbers;

contemporary Indian culture had less and less to do with the elite culture portrayed by academic painters.

Consistent with the need to know who and what made up Mexico, a number of statisticians, engineers, cartographers and those who now are called linguists or anthropologists set about cataloguing the country's resources. The population statistics they gathered tell a great deal about who the Indian was in the nineteenth century. Academy trained geographer-cartographer Antonio García Cubas published several well known compendia with statistics and maps. Most scholars today accept his estimates of Mexico's nineteenth century population. The country had a population of approximately 8-10,000,000 between 1869 and 1881.

García Cubas divided them into three "groups or races": "European and Spanishamerican, indigenous, and, mixed. By Spanish-american and European, he meant whites; by indigenous, Indians and by mixed, mestizos. By 1881, the Indian comprised about 4,000,000 or roughly one-third to half of the total population. Mestizos and Europeans comprised the remainder. García Cubas did not make just a racial distinction between these groups. He considered ethnicity, too. Like his colleagues, García Cubas used "language, customs and clothing" to categorize these groups. Francisco Pimentel's monumental study of 1862, for example, disclosed that Indians spoke 108 often mutually unintelligible

¹⁴⁷ Language was the most important languages. characteristic for several reasons. According to García Cubas, Europeans spoke Spanish because of their nationality and they spoke French, English, German and Italian because of their education. The mixed classes spoke Spanish with "provincialisms," giving hints of their ancestral indigenous language. Language differences thus separated and segregated Indians from Spaniards and mestizos. Indians simply could not communicate with other groups, much less have access to western education. Education conferred a higher social and economic status upon the Spanishamericans and to a lesser degree, upon the mestizo.

As a group, Indians constituted the bulk of Mexico's 80% rural population. This coincided with the un- or under-employed rural and urban working classes. This same underclass participated little in national politics or progress. They were trapped in a vicious cycle in which language segregated them, preventing their education and social mobility. Mexico's elite blamed the Indians and pitied them. The Indians were regarded by many as a potential resource and at the same time, as a major stumbling block on the road to national progress and prosperity.

Studies of nineteenth century attitudes towards the Indians indicate that the leading intellectuals and

political figures thought education was the surest means to incorporating them into modern society. Others proposed assimilation through intermarriage with foreigners as a way of changing the face of the nation. While the elite held progressive attitudes towards the Indians, its practices alienated the Indian from their agricultural subsistence patterns. It was the great contradiction of the liberal constitution that it both forced the Church to release lands and forced the Indian off of his ejido, the common land held by many Indian communities since prehispanic times. Liberals and conservatives alike seized thousands of acres of prime agricultural land as well as land for railroad tracks from both the Indians and the Church. The difference between the "real" Indian and the painted Indian is quite evident from the following passages. The first is a November 1869 review of José Obregón's The Discovery of Pulque and the second is a passage from a piece entitled La Raza Indígena by Julio Zarate, editor of the prominent liberal daily, El Siglo XIX, of December 1870.

What harmony in the coloring, what purity in drawing, what dignity and nobility in some, figures, what sentiment in others'...There is, in sum, such distinction in all of the types that there seems to be nothing but the spirit of the Aztec people, desiring to be revived, guiding the brush of the lucky painter.¹⁵⁰

Three hundred years of complete and silent submission slowly erased from the soul of a people these high virtues, that indomitable dignity which distinguishes free nations from enslaved peoples...Thus the conquered race lost even its historical traditions. Today the foreigner knows more than the Indian the past glories of our grandfathers, and the cold of slavery has paralyzed, to say it thus, intellectual life, the moral movement of a people who one day had their own life, their glories, their history and customs, which revealed to the astonished eyes of the conquistador a stage of civilization quite advanced, even comparing it to the same civilization of western Europe.¹⁵¹

The Spanish Conquest destroyed the culture of which Zarate so nostalgically speaks. Zarate's answer is not to return to the Indian his culture or history. That is saved for the painters, like Obregón, "touched by the Aztec spirit." The "indigenous race" of which Zarate speaks is the object of every verb, the recipient of pity and in need of "regeneration."

The one element which both prehispanic and contemporary Indians shared was skin color. Despite twentieth century scholars' claims to the contrary, color binds the paintings of prehispanic Indians to contemporary Indians because they share color. The one element which history painters could use, and did use, with precision was color. Their academic training required them to apply color, i.e., paint, to a preliminary drawing; training in the application of color always followed the mastery of drawing. Color had

a special meaning in Mexico in social terms as well. One need only look at the use of color in images of the Virgin of Guadalupe or the painted or printed sheets of "castes" circulated in various formats during the colonial and modern periods to prove this. In these sheets, artists often painted two adults of different colors (social castes) with a smaller third, of yet another color, who represents the child, or resultant caste [Figure 12].

In nineteenth century Mexico, skin color spoke of social rank and power both in real life and in history painting. In Ru'iz' Quetzalcoatl, for example, even the lithograph shows that the Indians surrounding Quetzalcoatl are darker, hence, more Indian-looking than Quetzalcoatl [Figure 2]. The story itself can account for this differentiation. Quetzalcoatl was already intertwined with the mythical bearded white man who would return to save his people. As a Christ-figure, the light skin is part of the make-up. His subordinates, his followers, the ones to whom he gives, appear distinct from him because of their poses as well as the color of their skin. This color difference effectively asserts a definitive hierarchical relationship between creator and created, between giver and receiver. In this painting, color and narrative combined refer to also to the posthispanic future of the Indians. In

Quetzalcoatl, the Indians, as we have noted, clearly distinguishable from the unmistakably Christ-like Quetzalcoatl, receive his bounty and blessing. Since Quetzalcoatl had no human pictorial form in prehispanic images Ruiz gave him the most adaptable western form most easily adaptable, i.e., that of Christ.

Conversion of the Indians to Christianity was the first and most efficient form of forced assimilation -- a process, as noted, of great importance to nineteenth century Mexico's elite. Conversion and assimilation is also the the underlying message of Papantzin [Figure], whose visionary messenger foretold the coming of foreigners, bringing knowledge of the True God. In both instances, the Indians are made to act as agents of their own conversion, with the Indian agent's skin painted lighter than those about to be converted.

Ruiz' and Urruchi's works are but two indications of the significance of color in the history paintings. In all history paintings, color takes on meaning in social terms, as the analysis of criticism in Chapters Four and Five will show. Dark skin identified and authenticated the Indian, making him/her distinctly Mexican. Light skin, in turn, indicated European ancestry. Those of European ancestry tended to possess power, Indians, dark skinned, did not.

In part the key to the significance of these

paintings of Indian is their ability to be read as both images of national culture, with the prehispanic Indian as its symbol, and as representations of assimilation. Assimilation meant not only a process of mixing, but also suppression of indigenous physical and cultural traits. There is no question that assimilation always moves towards a europeanization, not the reverse. As mestizos and even sometimes full-blooded Indians began to assume more power in Mexico, the color of the painted Indian became more significant. History painting aided the process of assimilation by making the painted Indian more like the European physically and culturally, but in order to assert the authenticity of the Indian as a national subject, it reaffirmed the differences between Indian and non-Indian as well. In other words, the object of assimilation had first and foremost to be made distinct.

Painted Indians: Identity and Identification

An examination of Cordero's painting of Columbus in the Court of the Catholic Sovereigns [Figure 1], provides an opportunity to see what both nineteenth and twentieth century intellectuals think of their own relationship to the Indian.

Cordero painted three main groups of figures in

the painting. The first group includes the king, queen and court who take up over half of the painting. King Ferdinand assumes the most important position; he stands in the center and is bathed in bright light.

Columbus, also clearly illuminated, assumes the position of second importance, standing below the monarchs. Columbus looks toward Ferdinand and Isabella while his left hand beckons their gaze towards the Indians who occupy the lower left hand portion of the canvas. The Indians, two standing and one kneeling, are in shadow. The monarchs focus on them and the treasures they offer.

Although the Indians are the primary focus of the participants within the scene, they hold the opposite position for the viewers of the painting. The public must look first at the monarchs, then Columbus and finally, the Indians. This order of viewing validates a chain of imperial command. In short, the Indians assume the status of conquered goods, no more and no less valuable than the goods they, themselves, bear. They are the object, not the subject of the painting.

Cordero's own written description of the painting reaffirms the message of his visual treatment:

On returning from the New World which he just discovered, he presents to the Catholic sovereigns several natives of the new land and rich gifts of the products of that soil...many ladies of honor and gentlemen are present at this scene, glorious for Spain.¹⁵²

Some nineteenth century critics of the painting looked at the Indians as more or less correct archaeological details. Rafael, who liked the painting, stated: "We would have liked for the Indians, who appeared for the first time that this brilliant court, to have occupied a more prominent place in the picture, but each artist has his particular way of seeing things." 153 El Daguerrotipo's anonymous reviewer regarded the Indians as patriotic and romantic reminders of Cordero's homeland:

The brush of Mr. Cordero, in representing this child of America, made himself without doubt the interpreter of vivid memories of his fatherland... in those moments, the artist makes an abstraction of the ideal, and reality comes to engrave itself on the canvas under the impulse of patriotic inspiration. 154

The contemporary criticism reveals nothing to suggest that the critics understood these Indians as untruthful or false depictions because of false or altered color or costume. In part this is because, as we discussed earlier, they understood the painting to represent discovery and the bestowal of enlightenment on, not conquest of, the Indians. Cordero's own words also revealed nothing to suggest that he presented this scene as one of conquest. Yet, the canvas says otherwise; the Indians are literally relegated to the dark corner,

and portrayed in submissive positions.

In this period, the audience did not identify itself with Cordero's Indians. Such identification seems only to begin to happen with the later paintings in which the Indians assume positions of prominence and authority. Twentieth century writers, however, do see some form of identification between painter and Indian. In the most recent monograph on Cordero, published in 1984, Elisa Garcia Barragán states that:

Cordero's identification with the theme is so powerful that he paints his self-portrait in one of the Indians who accompany Columbus. Given, it is a romantic image, which at the same time could well signal his self-identification with the indigenous past of Mexico. Or, perhaps it brings to him the nostalgia of his country. 155

We have no concrete evidence, however, that Cordero consciously identified himself with Mexico's indigenous past, and Garcia Barragán does not document her assertion. To my knowledge, the first author to identify the Indian as Cordero's self-portrait was Jean Charlot in his 1946 Art Bulletin article "Juan Cordero, a Nineteenth Century Mexican Muralist." Charlot convinced the artist's descendants that the self-portrait was to be found in the face of the kneeling Indian because, he argued that, "He has the small well-groomed moustache, the bony nose, and thin nostrils that were Cordero's, and that are scarcely Indian

156
characteristics." As evidence, needless to say, this does not stand up well. Other Indians in Cordero's or other artists' works, as already pointed out, often also have dark skin, Indian costumes and European features.

Charlot also referred to Cordero's kneeling Indian as a slave. Contemporary critics nineteenth century critics, however, did not regard him as a slave. Cordero's deliberate subordination of the Indian (himself?) to Columbus and the Spaniards (Europeans in general?) would have made some sense had the work been conceived and painted after the Academy of San Carlos denied him the Directorship of Painting. This could have been a pictorial reaffirmation of his written declaration that he did not intend to serve under Clavé. But Cordero painted it several years earlier. There is to date no evidence that the critics read this painting as anything but an expression of the happy discovery of the very land which they were then inhabiting.

Whether Charlot is correct in asserting that the kneeling Indian is Cordero is, in a sense, unimportant. That the public, did or did not read it as his self-portrait is important, however. Nineteenth century critics did not read it as Cordero's self-portrait, they read it simply as a portrayal of an Indian. The predicament is this: how do you paint and interpret a

subject - the Indian - whose heritage you must celebrate, whose land you must steal, whose numbers you want to educate, but whom you do not yourself want to be? Nobody wanted to look like an Indian in the nineteenth century. Even General and President Porfirio Díaz, not even a full-blooded Indian, applied the cosmetics advertised in nineteenth century papers as capable of lightening skin. This, of course, did not change Díaz' heritage or even his skin color. Charlot had Cordero doing the opposite. Perhaps unwittingly, Charlot revealed the sometimes superficial nature of such costuming, when he said of Cordero's alleged self-portrait: "A nationalist connotation then even allows the white Mexican to think of himself as an Indian."¹⁵⁷ This statement implies that the Indians can be constructed from a group of physical and cultural traits which can be assembled and reassembled, making the Indian visible one moment and invisible the next, according to social and cultural needs.

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

- 95 For a history of the National Museum, see Mendoza, Gumerindo and Jesús Sánchez, Catálogo de las colecciones históricas y arqueológicas del Museo Nacional de México, 1882.
- 96 The inventory of the Academy of San Carlos library through 1879 is listed in AGN MJIP 3:34, 1879.
- 97 A particularly good example of this is the body of works published by Alfredo Chavero in the Anales del Museo Nacional, volume I (1877), II (1882) and three III (1886); see especially the articles entitled "La Piedra del Sol."
- 98 For a study of the interpretations of the Aztec Calendar Stone and the process through which it came to be a national symbol, see Widdifield, Stacie G., The Aztec Calendar Stone: A Critical History, unpublished Master's Thesis, University of California at Los Angeles, 1981.
- 99 On the question of the alliance between creoles, liberals and Mexico's ancient indigenous heritage see Brading, David, op cit 1980; Keen, Benjamin The Aztec Image in Western Thought, 1971 and Phelan, John Leddy "Neo-Aztecism in the Eighteenth Century and the Genesis of Mexican Nationalism," Culture in History: essays in honor of Paul Radin, Stanely Diamond, ed., New York: Columbia University Press, pp.760-777, 1960.
- 100 Francisco Clavigero, for one, confronted the charge of cannibalism and human sacrifice among the Aztecs by noting that the same practices had occurred among the Scythians, the Carthaginians and the ancient Greeks in his Historia de México Antiguo, 1945, volume I, p.33.
- 101 Donald Robertson, among many others, has addressed the question of European influences in the illustrations of post-conquest manuscripts; see, in particular Mexican Manuscript Painting of the Early Colonial Period: The Metropolitan Schools, 1959.

- 102 For a survey of foreign illustrations of Mexico see México Ilustrado por Europa, del Renacimiento al Romanticismo, the catalogue for an exhibition of the same name held in Mexico City in 1983.
- 103 Brasseur de Bourbourg, M. L'Abbé, Histoires des Nations Civilisées du Mexique et de l'Amérique-Centrale, Paris: Arthus Bertrand, Editeur, 1857, 3 vols., Book I, Chapter 2, pp.59-60.
- 104 The terms of the competition were: "Un pequeño croquis dibujado en el término de seis horas; de un pequeño boceto pintado igualmente en seis horas; de un cartón y del cuadro," Rdef:539.
- 105 Academia de San Carlos, Vigésima Exposición Nacional de Bellas Artes: Catálogo Ilustrado, Mexico: Imprenta de Epifanio d. Orozco y Cia., 1881.
- 106 Rdef:410:#6.
- 107 Ixtlilxochitl, Fernando de Alva, Obras Históricas, Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1975, 2 vols., I:274-275.
- 108 Ixtlilxochitl, ibid, also refers to the birth of the son of Tecpancaltzin and Xochitl in AD 900.
- 109 ASC CAT, 1881 p.26. In the caption, Urtuchi is listed as Hurruchi; I assume that this is a typographical error.
- 110 Clavigero, Francisco Javier, Historia Antigua de México, Mexico: Editorial Porrúa, 1945, 3 vols., Vol.II pp.42-46. Prescott, William H., History of the Conquest of Mexico, New York: The Modern Library, 1936, p.172, note 11, mentions this story briefly.
- 111 Prescott, op cit, p.44.
- 112 Ibid, p.45.

- 113 Ibid.
- 114 RP:II:271.
- 115 According to the article, Sánchez Solís had commissioned a number of works, all of which were to be housed in a salon decorated in prehispanic-derived motifs.
- 116 See, for example, Díaz del Castillo, Bernal, The Discovery and Conquest of Mexico, 1517-1521. Edited by Genaro García. Translated and with an Introduction and Notes by A.P. Maudslay, New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1956, pp.121-165. Prescott, op cit pp.221-251 or Ixtlilxochitl op cit vol.II, pp.209-216.
- 117 Ixtlilxochitl op cit vol.II, p.212.
- 118 RdeT:491:#135.
- 119 See for example, Clavigero op cit, vol.III, pp.78-89; Díaz del Castillo op cit, pp.169-192 or Prescott op cit, pp.271.
- 120 Las Casas, Fray Bartolomé, Tratados, Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965, 2 vols. pp.67-71.
- 121 Ibid. Other estimates range from 3,000 to 6,000.
- 122 RdeT:491.
- 123 RdeT:475:#53
- 124 Ibid
- 125 Las Casas, op cit.
- 126 RdeT:539:#19.
- 127 Prescott, William H., Historia de la Conquista de México. Translated from the English by Joaquín Navarro, Mexico: Ignacio Cumplido, 1844-46, 3 vols. Volume III contains the illustrations.
- 128 Prescott, op cit, 1936, Book VI, p.5.
- 129 Ibid, pp.535-537.
- 130 RP:II:271; Nanda Leonardini (personal communication). Cuauhtémotzin is the diminutive of Cuauhtémoc.
- 131 Prescott op cit, 1844-46, vol.III, p.142-143; López de Gomará op cit, vol.II, p.62.
- 132 "Nada podrá dar mejor idea de lo que es la visión de una época acerca del pasado, como este y otros cuadros de interpretación del antiguo mundo indígena de México; y es que la visión académica clasicista del siglo XIX fue un mal molde para aquel mundo tan alejado del dulzón clasicismo. Pero la escuela de Clavé hizo maravillas y logró hacer creer, como algunos historiadores de nuestro tiempo, que así era en verdad el pueblo conquistado por los españoles... los académicos ni gustaron ni entendieron la belleza autóctona del pueblo Mexicano, antes la despreciaron, por eso se esforzaron en darlo otra belleza clasicista, la única que tuvieron por tal. Por todo lo anterior no puede parecerme sino ingenua aquella visión y por su pretendido objetivismo, falsa, de toda falsedad, lo cual no quiere decir que deje ser interesante y auténtica en cuanto a su tiempo." Justino Fernández, Arte moderno de contemporáneo Mexicano, 1952, pp.88-89.
- 133 "Sé que esas pinturas, de grande interés para la arqueología y la historia no son igualmente para el arte, que es lo que en esta casa se profesa. En ellas no hay que buscar dibujo correcto, no ciencia del claro-oscuro y la perspectiva, ni sabor de belleza y de gracia. Parece que a sus autores llamó poca atención la figura humana que a nuestros ojos es el prototipo de lo bello... todo indica que en las razas indígenas no estaba

despierto el sentido de la belleza que es donde procede el arte," Couto, op cit, pp.34-35.

134 Rodríguez Prampolini, op cit, 1977, p.33.

135 See Ignacio Bernal, The History of Mexican Archaeology, 1980 for a survey of the scholarly works on prehispanic culture written in the nineteenth century.

136 Rdet:72:#42.

137 See Keen, op cit, p.33 for a discussion of Solis' work.

138 Prescott, op cit, 1846, see volume III for Ignacio Cumplido's illustrations, figure 33.

139 See Friedlander, Walter, From David to Delacroix, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977 for a discussion of Girodet's work, see page 43 and figure 26.

140 Tibol, op cit, p.46.

141 "Si el sentido estético nacionalista hubiera estado entonces más desarrollado, eso hubiese bastado para demostrar que el instrumento europeo que Clavé había puesto en manos de los pintores mexicanos no era el más apropiado para expresar la propia realidad," op cit, pp.46-49.

142 The Mexican government still gave Moctezuma's descendants a pension in 1868, Dublán y Lozano, op cit, 1368:303:#6327.

143 The formation of societies and their meetings were usually announced in the Mexico City Press. The Aztec Society was formed in 1874 (El Siglo XIX).

144 Aida Manzoni Cometta, El Indio en la poesía de América Española, 1939 and Concha Meléndez La Novela

indianista en hispanoamerica, 1934 address the Indian in Mexican literature.

145 See especially Cuadro Geográfico..., 1885, for his analysis of Indian groups see Carta II, Parte Etnográfica, pp.17-24.

146 Keith A. Davies, "Tendencias demográficas urbanas durante el siglo XIX en México," Historia Mexicana, 21(3):481-524, 1972 has tabulated population statistics for the nineteenth century; he relies on García Cubas.

147 Cuadro comparativo de las lenguas indígenas de México, 1874.

148 García Cubas, op cit, 1885.

149 On this question, see in particular: Martin S. Stabb, "Indigenism and Racism in Mexican Thought, 1815-1911," Journal of Inter-American Studies 1:405-432, 1959; T.G. Powell, "Mexican Intellectuals and the Indian Question, 1876-1911," Hispanic American Historical Review, 48:19-30, 1968 and "Los liberales, el campesinado indígena y los problemas agrarios durante la reforma," Historia Mexicana 21(4):653-676.

150 "¡Qué armonía en el colorido, qué pureza en el dibujo, qué dignidad y nobleza en unas figuras, qué sentimiento en oras!...hay en suma, tanta distinción en todos los tipos, que no parece sino que el espíritu del pueblo azteca, deseando reivindicarse guiaba el pincel del afortunado pintor," L.G.R., "Exposición de bellas artes," El Siglo XIX, November 15, 1369.

151 "Trescientos años de sumisión completa y silenciosa borraron lentamente del alma de un pueblo esas altas virtudes, esa dignidad indomitable que distinguen a las naciones libres de los pueblos esclavos...Así la raza vencida perdió hasta sus tradiciones históricas: hoy el extranjero sabe mas que el indio las glorias pasadas de nuestros abuelos, y el frío de la esclavitud ha paralizado, por decirlo así, la vida intelectual, el movimiento moral de un pueblo que tuvo un día su vida propia, sus glorias, su historia y sus costumbres, que revelaron a los ojos atónitos del

CHAPTER FOUR

Heroes in History Painting: 1869-1881

Representations of nineteenth century Mexican

heroes appear to be different from those of the prehispanic Indians. The twentieth century refers to paintings of heroes as pintura histórica, and paintings of Indians as pintura indigenista, as if they are two different kinds of paintings. The style in which they are painted suffers no scrutiny, no art historian quibbles with a cleavage between what is represented and how represented; and there is apparently no "other" reality which is transformed by a false or inappropriate style. Indeed, what is striking is that paintings of heroes are so rarely mentioned; it is as if they are taken for granted. This may have something to do with the process by which they entered national history painting, one entirely different from that by which the prehispanic Indian entered.

How contemporary heroes got into images was clearly a far more conscious process which literally recorded in legislation and official proposals of various types. The table of contents of Manuel Dublán's and José María Lozano's multi-volume work of 1876, Legislación Mexicana, reveals the immediate attention which the first government of Independent Mexico gave to the

conquistador un grado de civilización bastante adelantado, aún comparándose con la misma civilización de la Europa occidental." Julio Zarate, "La raza indígena," El Siglo XIX, December 2, 1870.

152 Charlot, op cit., p. 99.

153 "Hubiéramos querido que los indios que por primera vez aparecían en aquella brillante corte, hubiesen ocupado un lugar más prominente en el cuadro; pero cada artista tiene su modo especial de ver las cosas," Rafael de Rafael, "Tercera exposición de la Academia de San Carlos," op cit., 1851.

154 "El pincel del señor Cordero, al representar a ese himno de América, se hizo sin duda el intérprete de los vivísimos recuerdos de su patria: en esos momentos, el artista hace abstracción de lo ideal, y la realidad viene a estamparse en la tela bajo el impulso de la patriótica inspiración," Anonymous, "Bellas artes, exposición de la Academia de San Carlos, El Daguerrotipo, January 4, 1851.

155 El pintor Juan Cordero: los días y las obras, 1984, p. 30.

156 Jean Charlot, "A Nineteenth Century Mexican Muralist," Art Bulletin, 28:248-265, 1946, p. 251, note 17.

157 Charlot, ibid.